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ABSTRACT

A study elicited opinions of and suggestions for special education teacher preparatory programs from Kentucky special education teachers. A total of 142 special education teachers in Kentucky responded to a 13 item questionnaire concerning the teachers' undergraduate and graduate level training, prevalent academic problems exhibited by their students, most effective instructional techniques, most effective classroom management strategies, most important skills for special education teachers, and professional development courses. Teachers felt that practical experience was the most valuable facet of teacher training and that a multitude of varied methods and materials was necessary to meet the unique needs of atypical pupils. The teachers suggested observing peers' classrooms and exchange of ideas among peers as an alternative to classroom lectures. Results of responses to each of the questions are discussed and displayed in tabular form. (CB)

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INFORMATION FROM SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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At the

Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the

Mid-South Educational Research Association

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

The Kentucky legislature has recently passed an education reform bill in a specially-called July session, through the leadership and hard work of the governor and the superintendent of public instruction, committing Kentucky's resources and efforts to upgrade her educational system. In the current 1985-86 school year, the Kentucky Department of Education, against seemingly insurmountable odds, has initiated the Beginning Teacher Internship Program to insure that new teachers would be guided and supported to better serve Kentucky school pupils. To teacher eductors, these are exciting days. Kentucky, like many other states, is responding to numerous public decrial and challenge toward educational reform (Honig, 1985; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Increasingly, bold and decisive measures have been adopted, demonstrating the state's earnest commitment to better educational provisions for her citizenry.

What is teacher eductors' part in these accelerating reformatory endeavors? As excellence in public education is predicated on quality teacher education, teacher educators should at least examine their training programs to ensure that preservice and inservice teachers are receiving the best possible training, to enable them become efficacious facilitators of academic and social learning.

According to a survey conducted by this author and her associate (Leung and Carr, 1984), regular classroom teachers in Kentucky considered relevance and immediacy as the hallmarks of quality teacher education. Teachers generally appreciate programs and courses which could be readily and realistically applied to everday classroom situations. In their responses to various items in the survey instrument, regular classroom

teachers identified the most prevalent academic, social and task-related problems exhibited by their pupils. They suggested some successful instructional and management methods and materials for Kentucky learners, as verified by their teaching experience. Furthermore, they listed certain skills which they thought preservice teachers should have acquired before entering the field; and the courses which they, the veterans, would take for professional growth and self-improvement. Such information could be judiciously utilized by Kentucky teacher educators to verify and modify programs and course content, to enhance their relevance and immediacy for Kentucky teachers. Unfortunately, the survey results did not include opinions from special education teachers. Due to their small sample size (n=7), and their typically dissimilar reponses based on their atypical student populations, the researchers decided to discard this subgroup to avoid contamination of overall research data. A replication of the survey research specifically for special education practitioners would be appropriate and should be conducted in the near future (Leung and Carr, 1984).

The present study was the fulfillment of the above "research promise." The purpose was to survey the opinion of, and solicit suggestions from Kentucky special education teachers, to insure relevance and immediacy, and thus the quality of special education teacher preparatory programs. The goal was to identify these teachers' professional needs, through their subjective evaluation of their training programs, and their perception of their most critical field demands. Specifically, the special educators would be requested to respond to questions concerning the beneficial and inadequate aspects of their undergraduate and graduate preparatory programs offered by Kentucky institutions; the dominant academic and social problem

behaviors observed among kentucky's handicapped youngsters; the empirically-proven effective programs, materials and techniques with these students; and essential skills for preservice and desirable skills and knowledge for inservice special educators. Reponses from this research would further be compared with those from the regular teachers, to investigate if the two groups share similar values, needs and concerns; and whether differential training is justified.

Method

The same 13-item questionnaire, with five checklist-typed questions and eight open-ended questions, used with regular classroom teachers in the previous research (Leung and Carr, 1984),was the survey instrument. Slight modification on the front page for demographic data occurred, to facilitate the mailing of summary reports to participants. The questionnairs were sent to a randomized sample of 12% of Kentucky schools, to be distributed by the building principals to their special education practitioners. (Two questionnaires for small schools and three for large schools. Schools were welcome to make duplicates should they have more special education teachers who were all willing to participate.) Individual principals were contacted by letter in late March, 1985. Respondents were requested to return the questionnaires no later than the third week of April, in self-addressed stamped envelopes. Beginning from the last week of April, follow-up telephone calls were made to remind potential respondents.

Results and Discussions

Out of 405 questionnaires, 142 were returned, at a rate of about 35%. (Telephone follow-up revealed that most non-public schools, which though in the randomized sample, do not have special education classes.) The returned

sample contained 104 special education teachers who received undergraduate training in Kentucky; and 106 teachers who are either current or former Kentucky graduate students. Eight respondents had never received special education training in Kentucky, while ten respondents were either not certified to teach speical education, or not engaged in teaching handicapped pupils. The breakdown statistics, based on grade-level taught, student socioeconomic condition, and years of teaching experience are presented in Table 1, which also indicates the item numbers for which the subgroup statistics concerned. As evident from the data, statistics and related interpretation for some of the subgroups may be meaningless or even misleading, since the numbers are small or are not even within groups. Readers should use discretion in examining the following results and implications.

Table 1. Demographic Breakdown of Numbers of Respondents

Respondents	State Totals	Grade-Level			Student SES		Yrs.of Experience	
		Ele.	Mid.	Sec.	Rural	Urban	0-5	6+
KY-Trained Undergraduates (Items 1, 2)	104	60	29	15	79	25	35	69
KY-Trained Graduates (Items 3, 4)	106	57	32	17	75	31	27	79
All Teachers (Items 5-13)	132	74	38	20	93	39	41	91

The responses of Kentucky special education practitioners to all items in the questionnaire are tabulated and categorized, and are presented and discussed in the following tables and paragraphs. However, the tables are abbreviated, presenting only the higher frequencies of responses. Interested readers could obtain full tables by writing to the senior author.

Beneficial and Inadequate Aspects of Programs. Questions 1-4 requested teachers to evaluate the beneficial and inadequate aspects of their teacher preparation programs. (Questions 1 & 3 are checklist-typed; while 2 & 4 are open-ended.)

In Question #1, special education teachers who received undergraduate training in Kentucky ranked student teaching (84% frequency checked) and practicum experience (73%) as the top two most beneficial aspects of their

Question #1:

What is the most beneficial aspect of your undergraduate teacher training program?

	State Totals (104) %	Ele. (60) %	Mid. (29) %	Sec. (15) %	Rural (79) %	Urban (25) %	0-5 yrs. (35) %	6+ yrs. (69) %
Student teaching	84	87	76	87	81	92	89	81
Practicum experience	73	75	59	93	71	80	77	71
Behavior & classroom management	62	57	69	67	61	64	71	57
Methods & materials	60	63	28	67	56	72	71	54
Reading, Lang. arts	47	47	52	40	44	56	46	48
Human development/ learner characteristics	44	52	28	27	42	52	26	54
Test & assessment	42	43	45	33	41	48	54	36

undergraduate program. This is very similar to regular classroom teachers' responses in the previous research. The next most beneficial area, according to special education teachers, is behavior and classroom management, followed by courses on methods and materials. Working with exceptional learners who may have manifold and severe academic and/or social problems, special educators do need a wide variety of management and instructional techniques. Regular classroom teachers, on the other hand, ranked methods and materials highly, but did not find their undergraduate program provide them with sufficient information and training on management skills. This may due to the fact that behavior management is usually a distinct component in special education training programs, but not so in regular education programs. Moreover, the seven highest ranking program areas, according to special education practitioners, are generally components in special education curricula. The practitioners' evaluation may serve as program verification, confirming their appropriateness and significance as program requirements.

An examination of the breakdown statistics indicates that secondary-school special education teachers value practicum experience much more (93%) than other subgroups, similar to the findings among regular teachers. The middle-school subgroup, on the other hand, considered training in behavior and classroom management more important than practicum experience. This may relate to the behavior problems specific to the age group, aggravated by the presence of handicapping conditions, which may further accentuate academic and social/emotional problems. Then, experienced teachers (those with six or more years of teaching experience)

did not find behavior and classroom management as beneficial a component in their undergraduate program, as did the newer teachers. The veterans might have acquired or developed their own repertoire, have forgotten the importance of these skills to inexperienced practitioners, or did not have such specific training in older programs. In other words, special education training programs might have improved over the years.

Question #2:

What is the most inadequate aspect of your undergraduate teacher education program?

	State Totals (104) %	Ele. (60) %	Mid. (29) %	Sec. (15) %	Rural (79) %	Urban (25) %	0-5 yrs. (35) %	6+ yrs. (69) %
PRACTICALITY OF PROGRAM								
Not enough practical experience	20	30	10	0	19	24	14	23
Irrelevant, inapplicable course content	17	20	14	13	14	28	20	16
Inadequate preparation for reality, paper work, legality, problems, crises	9	12	7	7	6	20	17	6
SPECIFIC INADEQUACY								
Behavior & classroom management	13	17	14	0	15	8	23	9
Methods & materials	10	7	17	7	10	8	11	9
Learning theories & psychology	7	7	7	7	5	12	9	6
Test, evaluation & application	6	5	3	13	6	4	6	6
Education foundation & philosophy	6	5	7	7	4	12	6	6
Curriculum development	5	2	10	7	4	8	11	1
Teaching math	5	3	3	13	4	8	3	6
Reading & language arts	4	3	3	7	4	4	0	6
Interacting with parents and professionals	3	5	0	0	3	4	3	3

Reponses to Question #2 echo the opinion expressed by regular teachers. There is not enough practical experience, which is the most beneficial aspect of teacher education programs. The next most frequently made complaints are irrelvance and inapplicability of course content. Some also lamented the fact that undergraduate studies did not prepare them for reality, with the tremendous amount of paper work associated with exceptional learners, and the complexity of legal requirements, the unpredictable classroom problems and crises related to handicapped youngsters, etc. These problems are more keenly felt by teachers in urban areas, with the diversities of student population, administrative red-tapes, and the dynamics of urban society. Not enough practical experience was the problem with undergraduate program, according to "older" teachers; while irrelevance, inapplicable and unrealistic program and course content bothered inexperienced teachers more, especially when they were placed in unfamiliar socioeconomic surroundings. As to specific areas of inadequacy, behavior and classroom management, as well as methods and materials, important and beneficial though they are to teachers, were nevertheless not sufficient to meet the demand of the field. The middle-school teachers especially felt that they were inadequately trained in these areas. Special education programs, taught at the undergraduate level, tend to focus on elementary grades, and fail to prepare middle-school teachers with the information and skills to deal with junior high pupils' academic and social needs. Methods and materials are not that important to senior-high teachers, since schools tend to departmentalize at that level. Teachers generally do not teach across all subject areas. Besides, by the time handicapped students reach that level, a lot of them may switch to functional

skills, or they would have dropped out of public school. Anyway, it is not as demanding as teaching handicapped middle-schoolers, when there is still hope that they may catch up, or get as far academically and socially, as their potential may allow them.

Question #3:

What is the most beneficial aspect of your graduate teacher education program?

	State Totals (106) %	Ele. (57) %	Mid. (32) %	Sec. (17) %	Rural (75) %	Urban (31) %	0-5 yrs. (27) %	6+ yrs. (79) %
Methods & materials	56	68	38	47	51	68	59	54
Tests & assessment	52	56	44	53	51	55	30	59
Human development & psychology	42	44	38	41	41	42	30	46
Curriculum design & development	29	33	19	35	29	29	44	24
Research skills & professional growth	19	19	16	24	20	16	30	15
Interpersonal & public relations	17	18	16	18	19	13	11	19

Similar to regular classroom teachers, special education teachers who received their graduate training in Kentucky found that courses on methods and materials are most beneficial. Unlike the former, special education teachers found tests and assessment more profitable, as diagnostic skills are of strategic value to individualize programs to meet handicappped students' unique needs. Human development and psychology is also important for competency in working with exceptional individuals, as oftentimes, academic instruction may be futile without therapeutic

interpersonal relationship. As for subgroup statistics, the middle-school teachers, again, did not find courses on methods and materials very helpful in terms of meeting their professional needs. Graduate-level courses still tend to concentrate on elementary-school subject areas and skill clusters. The recent trend of incorporating methods and materials for older age groups is a step towards the right direction.

Question #4:

What is the most inadequate area of your graduate teacher education program?

	State Totals (106) %	Ele. (57) %	Mid. (32) %	Sec. (17) %	Rural (75) %	Urban (31) %	0-5 yrs. (27) %	6+ yrs. (79) %
PROGRAM IN GENERAL								
Applicability, relevance of course content	21	23	9	35	23	16	22	20
Redundancy; overlap with undergraduate program	12	7	13	29	12	13	19	10
Practical experience	6	5	6	6	5	7	0	8
Unrealistic professors	4	5	3	0	3	7	4	4
SPECIFIC INADEQUACY								
Curriculum development	10	11	9	6	8	13	11	9
Research skills	7	7	9	0	4	13	4	8
Working with parents, others & p.r.	7	5	6	12	8	3	8	6
Methods & materials	6	9	3	0	4	10	11	4
Theory & philosophy	6	4	13	0	7	3	4	6
Reading & lang. arts	5	7	3	0	5	3	0	6

If practical experience is the foremost inadequacy for undergraduate programs, then irrelvance and inapplicability are the most frequently mentioned deficits in graduate programs. There seems to be more practicum opportunities for recent undergraduates, (see question #2), an evidence of

program improvement. But there is no indication of increased relevance in recent graduate programs for special education teachers. Moreover, there is redundancy and overlapping with undergraduate programs, which were especially conspicuous to newer teachers who might have recently completed their undergraduate training. Secondary-school teachers also felt the redundancy too. Graduate programs need to modify to satisfy the more sophisticated needs of graduate students and inservice teachers.

In specific areas, most graduate students desire skills in curriculum development, which are necessary in many special education situations, when there few readily available programs to meet specific needs. Working with parents, regular teachers, other professionals, and community people is another area of inadequacy. It seems that secondary-school teachers especially need more training in this category.

Current Field Demand. Questions #5, 6 and 7 attempt to assess current field situations, so that professors can be more realistic in their presentations. When practitioners report on what they perceived as the major academic, task-related and other social problems exhibited by their pupils, teacher educators could more adequately prepare them to meet the challenges in the real classroom, thus enhance the relevance of preparatory programs. Since these questions concern with handicapped students rather than teacher education programs directly, responses from all teachers who were currently teaching in Kentucky classrooms were used.

In question #5, special education teachers reported that the most dominant academic deficit, among handicapped students, is reading problem. Written expression is the next problematic area, which is especially marked

among high-schoolers. This is to be expected, since most handicapped pupils were referred to special education situations due to extreme deficiencies in reading performance. As students reach higher grades, more writing tasks are demanded, therefore students at higher grades would be more frequently identified by their writing skills rather than reading problems. Listening skills, which were ranked as number one academic problem by regular teachers, were considered less problematic among handicapped students. Then, with high-schoolers, study skills are rather dominant, as students depend on these to achieve successfully at high school level.

Question #5:

What are the most prevalent academic problems exhibited by your students?

	State Totals (132) %	Ele. (74) %	Mid. (38) %	Sec. (20) %	Rural (93) %	Urban (39) %	0-5 yrs. (41) %	6+ yrs. (91) %
Reading	83	81	87	80	84	79	76	86
Written expression	77	76	74	90	75	82	68	81
Spelling	67	58	76	80	66	69	63	68
Listening skills	61	70	53	45	62	59	66	59
Oral expression	51	58	39	45	47	59	46	52
Math	47	46	55	35	45	51	46	47
Study skills	45	38	47	70	47	41	54	42

Like non-handicapped students, irresponsibility is one of the major social problems exhibited by handicapped students. Unlike their non-handicapped peers, though, most handicapped students have to deal with

low self-concept and coping with frustration, which could be natural outcome of having handicaps that impede learning and development. Besides instructional and management techniques, special education teachers do need to tend to personal and emotional needs, as indicated by the practioners in their responses for subsequents items. Perhaps therapeutic relationship, counseling skills, motivational techniques, or just plain positive personality traits are in demand in order to be effective facilitators among handicapped learners.

Question #6:

What are the most prevalent social problems exhibited by your students?

	State Totals (132) %	Ele. (74) %	Mid. (38) %	Sec. (20) %	Rural (93) %	Urban (39) %	0-5 yrs. (41) %	6+ yrs. (91) %
Low self-concept	67	58	71	90	68	64	71	65
Coping with frustration	64	66	53	80	60	74	66	64
Controlling emotion	54	49	58	65	48	67	54	54
Irresponsible	54	50	63	50	56	49	49	56
Getting along with peers	48	49	53	35	43	59	44	49
Over-dependent	48	58	29	45	42	62	44	49
Inadequate verbal skills	44	46	45	35	47	36	41	45
Inappropriate social response	39	39	29	60	33	54	44	37
Aggression	38	41	34	35	34	46	34	40
Disrespect teacher/ authority	37	34	45	35	39	33	37	37
Overactive/overresponsive	36	42	26	30	35	36	41	33
Lack of social concern	30	26	32	40	30	28	22	33
Unable to respond socially	27	30	24	20	24	33	32	24
Teasing	24	18	39	20	22	30	20	26
Taking turns	17	24	11	5	16	20	24	14

Following instruction and focusing attention are the most frequently mentioned task-related classroom problems amongst handicapped students as well as non-handicapped students. Then, handicapped learners seem to have trouble working independently, and they often exhibit off-task behaviors. To counter-attack these problems, to teach skills and techniques to acquire these behaviors, or to adapt environmental and instructional variables to facilitate desirable behaviors would be the major tasks of regular as well as special education teachers. It seems that special education has been focusing on these deficit behaviors for a long time. More is needed, and more empirical studies should be implemented to come up with a wider repertoire and knowledge base for special education practitioners.

Question #7:

What are the most prevalent task-related classroom problems exhibited by your students?

	State Totals (132) %	Ele. (74) %	Mid. (38) %	Sec. (20) %	Rural (93) %	Urban (39) %	0-5 yrs. (41) %	6+ yrs. (91) %
Following instruction	68	66	68	70	70	64	73	66
Focusing attention	64	65	61	65	69	51	73	59
Working independently	61	66	50	60	55	74	63	59
Off-task	45	50	42	30	43	49	54	41
Too much/inappropriate talking	42	39	45	45	42	41	39	43
Unorganized	41	36	47	45	41	41	44	40
Low priority for academics	40	34	45	55	41	38	26	46
Incomplete assignment	39	32	47	45	38	41	44	36
Daydreaming	24	27	16	30	25	23	27	23

Tips For Course Content and Curricular Design. Items 8-13 solicit the practitioners' ideas and suggestions, based on their current field experiences, for improvement and modification of course and program content. If practitioners' needs and suggestions could be judiciously incorporated into teacher education programs, it would definitely increase their relevance and applicability.

Question #8:

What are the most successful instructional techniques that you have used to help students master academic skills?

	State Totals (132) %	Ele. (74) %	Mid. (38) %	Sec. (20) %	Rural (93) %	Urban (39) %	0-5 yrs. (41) %	6+ yrs. (91) %
Drill, repetition, mastery, overlearning, review	30	31	34	20	34	21	32	30
Individualized instruction	17	15	21	20	16	21	12	20
one-on-one instruction	12	15	11	5	13	10	17	10
Small-group, ability grouping, team work	11	14	5	15	14	5	7	13
Reward system (beh. mod.)	10	14	8	5	12	8	7	12
Varied/multi modalities of task or presentation	10	9	11	15	13	5	15	9
Games, activities, contest	10	14	11	0	12	8	17	8
Concrete objects, hands-on experiences	8	9	5	10	10	5	5	10
Direct instruction approach	7	8	5	10	5	13	7	8
Monitor progress, feedback	7	8	8	5	5	13	2	10
Adapt materials, task, environment	6	8	5	5	6	8	17	2
Individual guide, schedule, assignment, contract, etc.	6	7	8	0	4	10	5	7
Task analysis, specified objective, skill sequence	6	7	5	5	3	13	7	5
Peer tutoring	5	1	5	15	5	3	2	5
Modeling, demo, cues	5	5	3	5	5	3	9	2
Learning strategies	4	4	3	5	3	5	2	4
Computers	4	3	5	5	4	3	5	3
Teacher enthusiasm, support, ingenuity	4	5	3	0	5	0	5	3
Motivational approaches	3	4	3	0	3	3	0	4

Question #9:

What are the most effective instructional techniques that you have used to help students acquire social skills?

	State Totals (132) %	Ele. (74) %	Mid. (38) %	Sec. (20) %	Rural (93) %	Urban (39) %	0-5 yrs. (41) %	6+ yrs. (91) %
Situational, individual or group discussion	32	31	34	30	38	18	37	30
Role-playing	20	22	24	10	22	18	29	16
Social situation for practice	17	14	24	20	14	26	22	15
Reward & punishment contingencies	15	16	16	10	15	15	20	13
Role model, observational learning	13	15	16	0	13	13	22	9
Mainstreaming: classroom and other settings	8	14	3	0	6	13	7	9
Rules, with consistency	7	7	8	5	8	5	15	3

Question #10:

What are your most effective behavior/classroom management strategies?

	State Totals (132) %	Ele. (74) %	Mid. (38) %	Sec. (20) %	Rural (93) %	Urban (39) %	0-5 yrs. (41) %	6+ yrs. (91) %
Reward & punishment contingencies	48	50	53	30	44	56	63	41
Token system; point system	15	23	3	10	13	21	17	14
Rules & specific behavior expectation - monitored	14	12	13	25	15	13	10	16
Time-out procedures	11	15	11	0	11	13	17	9
Structure - planned, organized	9	9	8	10	10	8	0	13
Teacher caring, listening, understanding, rapport	8	5	13	5	10	3	0	11
Preventive procedures, warning before punishment	6	7	5	5	8	3	7	5
On-level, relevant tasks	5	5	5	5	5	5	0	8
Behavior charting, feedback	5	4	8	0	3	8	7	3
Behavior contracting	5	3	5	10	6	0	7	3

Question #11:

In your opinion, what is the most important skill that a preservice student should have acquired before entering the teaching field?

	State Totals (132) %	Ele. (74) %	Mid. (38) %	Sec. (20) %	Rural (93) %	Urban (39) %	0-5 yrs. (41) %	6+ yrs. (91) %
HUMAN-RELATION SKILLS								
Discipline, behavior and classroom management	32	31	42	15	34	26	39	29
Interaction with parents, students & professionals	8	9	3	15	10	5	5	10
Psychology of human development and handicapped persons	7	8	3	10	6	8	7	7
Understand & accept socio-cultural differences	3	1	5	5	3	3	0	4
INSTRUCTIONAL COMPETENCIES								
Organization and planning	8	5	16	5	6	13	15	5
Communication skills	8	8	5	10	6	10	7	8
Individualize instruction	7	4	11	10	5	10	10	5
Variety of practical experience	6	5	3	15	5	8	7	5
Variety of teaching strategies	5	4	3	20	4	8	5	5
Organize /sequence knowledge and skills	5	4	5	5	4	5	0	7
Assessment and diagnosis	5	6	3	5	4	8	7	4
Mastery of subject matter	4	0	11	5	4	3	5	3
Teaching reading and math	3	3	5	0	3	3	2	3
Handling paper work	3	3	5	0	2	5	2	3
Curriculum development	1	0	5	0	2	0	5	0
PERSONAL QUALITY								
Love, acceptance, understanding of handicapped students	21	24	18	10	19	23	15	23
Flexible, adaptive, creative and sense of humor	11	8	13	20	11	13	12	11
Patience	7	9	3	5	9	3	5	8
Practical, realistic, self-reliant	4	4	3	5	3	5	5	3

Question #12:

What is your favorite instructional program/material that you would recommend to other teachers?

	State Totals (132) %	Ele. (74) %	Mid. (38) %	Sec. (20) %	Rural (93) %	Urban (39) %	0-5 yrs. (41) %	6+ yrs. (91) %
DISTAR reading & math	17	26	8	0	17	15	12	19
SRA Corrective & Mastery programs	15	11	26	10	14	18	10	18
Steck Vaughn materials	10	1	24	15	13	3	7	11
Barnell Loft materials	8	5	13	5	9	5	2	10
Computers	8	8	11	0	9	5	2	10
Developmental Learning Materials	7	8	8	0	5	10	0	10

Question #13:

If you can choose one college course that will help you grow as a teacher, what will you choose?

	State Totals (132) %	Ele. (74) %	Mid. (38) %	Sec. (20) %	Rural (93) %	Urban (38) %	0-5 yrs. (41) %	6+ yrs. (91) %
PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE								
Practicum for application of skill & knowledge	10	8	13	10	13	3	12	9
Student teaching: master teacher; adequate time	5	3	5	15	5	5	7	4
Observational learning: peers' classrooms	5	5	0	5	3	8	2	5
PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS								
Instructional techniques and materials	10	12	8	5	10	10	12	9
Psychology: human understanding, child development, exceptionalities	8	8	8	5	8	8	10	7
Peers exchanging ideas, information, solutions	8	7	8	10	8	8	7	8
Computer for instruction	6	7	5	5	2	15	2	8

Responding to question #8, special education practitioners reported a wide range of field-tested strategies for teaching academic skills. The most frequently used strategy is the principle of repetition, which was also ranked first by regular teachers. This may verify that repetition and its various forms and applications is indeed the most effective learning principle. Individualized instruction and its variations ranked second, followed by a wide variety of instructional techniques and approaches that often appear in special education texts. This, again, may serve as "product" verification. Teacher educators may have more confidence in introducing these techniques to undergraduates as time-proven and field-tested. The overwhelming responses by special education teachers were also encouraging, indicating that they are aware of and might have experimented with many ideas,as necessitated by the reality of their profession.

In question #9, special educators again listed many "tricks" they had used with atypical learners. These techniques also resemble the list compiled from regular teachers' responses. The major differences are: special education teachers use behavioral contingencies more frequently, (as most of them would have a course in behavior modification); and quite a few mentioned mainstreaming handicapped students into regular classroom and other settings, including playground, field trips, and community as realistic and effective means of teaching social skills. From teachers' experience, there is at least one justification of mainstreaming.

For question #10, both regular and special education teachers conceded that behavioral contingencies, and rules with consistent monitoring are the most effective strategies. Then, structure and organization facilitate good behaviors. Last but not least, teacher's positive personality and

attitude still have a place in enhancing appropriate classroom behaviors. Both regular and special educators included pro-social personality traits as "effective behavior/classroom management strategies", suggesting that skills and behaviors may not be totally divorced from personality.

In question #11, opinion is sought from practitioners to insure reality and relevance of teacher education programs. Special educators had plenty and diversified suggestions, which were categorized into human relation skills, instructional competencies and personal quality. What impressed this researcher most is again, the high frequency of personality traits, which may not be observable and measurable, but nevertheless essential in teaching exceptional children and youth.

Special educators listed various favorite instructional programs and materials. It seems that SRA materials have the lion's share of Kentucky special education market. Their materials are either very effective, or they have outstanding salesmanship.

Responses for question #13 are a recapitulation of what special education teachers had been saying throughout the questionnaire. Practical experience is the most valuable facet of teacher training; and a multitude of varied methods and materials is necessary to meet the unique needs of atypical pupils. Then, they suggest observing peers' classrooms, and peers exchanging ideas as alternatives to classroom lectures. This researcher had tried them, and they were effective alternatives, though not to totally replace lectures!

In conclusion, Special education teachers in Kentucky had responded to a 13-item questionnaires. Their opinion and suggestions, which are equally diversified in numbers and magnitude as their students' learning problems, are extremely informative towards improvement in teacher education.

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